

Sow's Stunning Late Strike Rescues Hearts



Heart of Midlothian 2 Celtic 2

Ladbroke's SPFL Premiership, Sunday 27 December 2015 – Tynecastle

Hearts rescued a point from their clash with champions Celtic at a packed Tynecastle on Sunday thanks to a stunning late strike from Osman Sow. The Swedish hit-man's marvellous long-range effort earned the Gorgie side a 2-2 draw from a game which, while lacking in quality, was nonetheless a passionate affair.

Hearts Head Coach Robbie Neilson made just one change from the team that held on for a goalless draw at St Johnstone eight days ago with Gavin Reilly replacing the suspended Juanma who was red-carded in that game.

Hearts began the game in almost lackadaisical fashion despite the fact the visitors were without two key players, former Hibernian player Leigh Griffiths and Kris Commons. Ciftci had the first decent chance of the afternoon after five minutes but his effort was saved by Neil Alexander who had to look lively in the opening stages.

Hearts were giving the ball away cheaply and Rogic was the next Celtic player to try his luck on goal but, again, Alexander saved.

In the 18th minute, a Celtic corner found the head of Simunovic but his effort was collected by the Hearts custodian.

Frustration began to emanate from the Tynecastle stands and it took fully 20 minutes before the Maroons threatened when Sam Nicholson exchanged passes with Morgaro Gomis before firing a 25-yard shot just over the bar.

Encouraged by this, Hearts nearly went in front just past the half hour mark when a cross from the hard-working Arnaud Djoum found Prince Buaben whose effort was brilliantly saved by former Hearts keeper Craig Gordon. It was Gordon who came to the Hoops rescue again moments later when he saved well from Gavin Reilly as Hearts finally began to believe they were in with a chance of winning this game. Fine play again from Reilly then set up Nicholson but the winger's effort could only find the side-netting.

Just as Hearts were beginning to exert some control on the game, Celtic went ahead four minutes before half-time. Slack play from Morgaro Gomis was punished by McGregor's sublime pass to Bitton who coolly slotted the ball past Alexander to put the champions ahead. Not, though, for long.

Right at the end of the first half, Buaben's cross from the right was met by Sam Nicholson who volleyed home to equalise.

Half-time Hearts 1 Celtic 1

The second half began the same way as the first with Hearts looking hesitant and unsure and Celtic on top. A mistake by Augustyn let in Ciftci but his effort was saved well by Neil Alexander. Then good play from Lustig set up McGregor but his shot on goal was wide.

There was an inevitability about Celtic taking the lead again 20 minutes from the end. Hearts struggled to clear their defensive lines again and the ball fell at the feet of Rogic who fired home a fine effort from the edge of the Hearts penalty box to put the Champions ahead once more.

Tynecastle seemed deflated by this. This was a far from

vintage Celtic side yet Hearts seemed to be struggling to cope. Neilson replaced Reilly with Billy King and the youngster at least introduced a fresh vitality to the Hearts team.

It seemed like another hard luck story for the Maroons in the final minute when another attack was thwarted and a free-kick was awarded some 25 yards from goal. Prince Buaben and Osman Sow stood over the ball. Buaben touched it to Sow and the Swedish striker unleashed an unstoppable effort which flew high into the net beyond Craig Gordon who could only look on in horror.

Bedlam at Tynecastle as Hearts celebrated an unlikely point.

However, Robbie Neilson wasn't particularly happy after the game.

"The first thing I asked the players was whether they were happy with the point. And to a man they said no; they want to be winning games like that," he told the official Hearts website.

"We had a great opportunity to go and take three points but we gave away a slack goal in the first half. In the end we had to fight back twice, but the fact we're disappointed with a point shows how far we've come.

"Celtic have the quality to play through you and you can't afford to make mistakes. We're getting better, at times we pressed well but other times we caused ourselves problems."

Hearts: Alexander, Paterson, Augustyn, Rossi, Oshaniwa, Buaben, Gomis (Zanatta, 86'), Djoum (Pallardo, 61'), Nicholson, Reilly (King, 80'), Sow.

Celtic: Gordon, Simunovic, Bitton, Ciftci, Armstrong (Forrest, 20'), Rogic (Mackay-Steven, 77'), Boyata (Ambrose, 32'), Lustig, Johansen, McGregor, Tierney.

Ref: Steven McLean

Att: 16,844

Top man: Igor Rossi